

PBS' "TO THE CONTRARY"

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"PBS' TO THE CONTRARY."

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BONNIE ERBE: The Bush administration extends health insurance coverage to fetuses. Is this an effort to increase prenatal care for women or a move to limit abortion rights?

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON: If this administration would spend as much time on our faltering economy as it does on trying to push back on abortion rights, there'd be a lot more folks with jobs in this country today.

NANCY PFOTENHAUER: I think it's a tortured political calculus indeed to make this anything more than prenatal care.

MEGAN BEYER: It's a Trojan horse. It is an anti-choice strategy dressed up as healthcare.

ANGELA MCGLOWAN: Finally we have an administration that recognizes the right to life and the unborn.

MS. ERBE: Hello. I'm Bonnie Erbe. Welcome to "To the Contrary," a discussion of news and social trends from a variety of women's perspectives.

This week in the news, as President Bush lobbies for war on Iraq, polls show no gender gap exists in public support for such a war. We discuss why women are becoming more hawkish.

Then the fierce debate over the administration's controversial move to cover fetuses under federally funded health insurance.

Behind the headlines, the public school system is mired in criticism, but there are some victories. The Houston school district is honored for quick improvement in student test scores.

We begin with women's changing attitude toward war. As President Bush campaigns for a war against Iraq, recent Gallup polls show 56 percent of men and 58 percent of women support using ground troops to oust Saddam Hussein from power. This lack of a gender gap is a huge change from past years when women were less likely to support war.

A 1991 Gallup poll taken the week before the Persian Gulf War began found 67 percent of men supported an attack, but only 45 percent of women did. According to experts, women over time have been less likely to support war, more likely to question the use of force and military aggression. Women have also previously been more fearful for their draft-age children and more wary of casualties.

But experts say 9/11 changed all that. Women, as a group, have become as hawkish as men as part of their desire for more protection for their families from terrorism. There is some difference with age, however; the Gallup Poll found two-thirds of women aged 18 to 49 support war on Iraq, but only half of women 50 and older do.

So why the age difference, Congresswoman Norton? I mean, that really surprised me – women 50-plus more likely to oppose war; young women – I mean, I'm from the anti-Vietnam War generation when I remember going to demonstrations where there were hundreds of thousands of people, and they were all 25 and younger.

DEL. NORTON: And that has a lot to do – your life experience has a lot to do with your reaction to war, and young women have never lived with anything but peace in our time, and who live only with the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Look, this support for war is a support with a lot of caveats. If you scratch below the surface, for example, and find the total preemption doctrine – an outrageous doctrine – that now says all you all can get into it any time you don't like whoever is on the other side. If you go below it and find whether we are willing to go it alone, what you will find, for example, is a world opinion, an American opinion – especially opinion of American women forced this president to go through the U.N. He wasn't going to go there, he wasn't even going to come to where we the Congress are, and I thank women for slowing him up and making him go to what we call in the Congress regular order – go through the process before you take us to war.

MS. MCGLOWAN: But Congresswoman, if we don't do anything about this now – and I believe we should have an international coalition, and I think for the U.N. to maintain its integrity, it has to do something. Saddam Hussein has thumbed his nose at the U.N. for 11 years now. I think that we should go in, we should have an international coalition, we should have allies supporting us, and I think that the U.N. should bring Russia, China and France on board.

But, having said that, I'm in that age group – 18 to 49 – and --

MS. ERBE: Stop bragging!

(Laughter.)

MS. MCGLOWAN: -- and I care about – not saying that you don't –

MS. ERBE: You're in the – in the 18 and under by your looks. You look fabulous!

(Laughter.)

MS. MCGLOWAN: Thank you. I think that we're scared about our future. I lived through the Persian Gulf War. I was in college and I really didn't have the

understanding. But September 11<sup>th</sup> scared me, and I believe that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction and it is up to us – the leaders of the free world -- to take him down.

MS. BEYER: You know, I agree. I think that protective instinct – it is the same thing that had women nervous about going in during the Persian Gulf War. We have been hit on our homeland –

MS. : Exactly.

MS. BEYER: -- and women are feeling protective. It's the exact same thing. It's just reflecting different numbers. It's –

MS. ERBE: Isn't it –

MS. BEYER: When the body bags come back, I think that Eleanor is right. We will see – scratch the surface of this, we get into this war, body bags come back, numbers will change.

MS. PFOTENHAUER: Don't underestimate, though – don't underestimate the psychological impact of a direct attack on our soil, and I really do think that's what's happened here, and I think it's not going to stop.

MS. ERBE: Well, why did that specifically change women's opinion more than it changed men's?

MS. PFOTENHAUER: It was a – it's exactly what Megan said. It's that we tend to be more risk-averse and so what you're seeing in those polls is that women have decided we are more at risk not going after Saddam than we are if we sit here and hope it doesn't happen again.

MS. ERBE: Okay, what about – how are women going to feel – let's fast forward. We launch an attack on Iraq, we essentially repeat the scenario with Osama bin Laden – where is he? Six months later, the war is still going on, thousands of young American men and women are coming home in body bags – how are women going to feel then?

MS. PFOTENHAUER: I think it entirely depends on what happens in this country, if we're attacked again. I mean, we – we're a small non-profit and we started a small program after September 11<sup>th</sup> designed to give child-care services to the pregnant, widowed moms. We wanted to shut the program down on the anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup> because we'd run out of funds. I'm actually keeping it open just because I'm pretty sure we're going to have another -- unfortunately, another cause and another attack and another reason to have to help pregnant widows again.

MS. ERBE: Let's hope not but, geez, we do need to change topics. For the first time in U.S. history, government policy now says that life begins at conception.

ANCHORWOMEN: The Bush administration issued final rules for the government-subsidized children's health insurance program, or CHIP, which insures low-to moderate-income children and fetus' are now among those so-called children. The new rules allow states to spend federal money on prenatal care for pregnant women, designating this coverage as healthcare for the fetus. Pregnant illegal immigrants, who are denied any other form of government health insurance, are also covered under the rule.

As this marks the first any federal policy has defined childhood as beginning at conception, it sparked fierce debate. Critics say the administration is trying to advance its anti-abortion rights agenda by establishing a legal precedent for recognizing the fetus as a person. Conservative groups fire back abortion rights advocates are taking an ideological position against a program that extends more aid to low-income women.

MS. ERBE: I'm a little confused, Angela McGlowan, because I thought conservatives were opposed to any benefits for illegal aliens. These are people who are here illegally.

MS. MCGLOWAN: But when you're born in this country if you are the child of illegal –

MS. ERBE: But this is before the child is born. We're talking prenatal.

MS. MCGLOWAN: Fine, fine. Listen. I am of the belief that once there is conception that is a baby. My sister-in-law is going to have a child today. Actually she's in the hospital this morning. We found out that it was a boy before, you know, the birth of the child. We named it when the little kid was like two months in the stomach. It is a child. You know, it's like darned if you do, darned if you don't. Here people have complained about politicians, that we don't care about healthcare. Now we have an administration that's extending not only to low-income women but immigrants and now we're bad. We're turning this into a political issue.

DEL. NORTON: Bonnie, let me tell you just how cynical this is. You know, talk about – (unintelligible). I don't know how many folks he's getting his Hispanic base or what he hopes will be his Hispanic base. He's getting his anti-choice base. Let me tell just how cynical this. There's a bill going through the Senate that would have covered pre-natal care for all women. This administration has not supported that bill. Instead they support what the Supreme Court says it can't support. Roe v. Wade says explicitly that a fetus is not a person. George Bush and this administration cannot make the fetus a person. But what they can do is to show off for their right-wing base. That's all that is.

Look, we're not going to oppose this, we who have been for prenatal care. They want to do it that, we're going to expose why they're doing it. But we're certainly not going to say that, you know, immigrants or that women shouldn't get prenatal care. What we are going to oppose is that you can't get postpartum care.

MS. BEYER: And the hypocrisy of this.

DEL. NORTON: The woman – it doesn't matter what happens to the woman after the –

MS. MCGLOWAN: But you take incremental steps. Take incremental steps. It's protecting people who are 19 and under.

MS. BEYER: But the hypocrisy of this is very clearly demonstrated when you look at the treatment of immigrant children. Immigrants have to wait five years before their eligible for CHIP. So under this new regulation you would be covered while you're in the womb but once – I don't know what happens once you get out but that same mother has a three-year old daughter. That three-year old wouldn't be covered.

MS. MCGLOWAN: Well, at least we're protecting the unborn and we're helping –

DEL. NORTON: Why don't you protect all children?

MS. MCGLOWAN: May I please finish?

DEL. NORTON: And with the incremental – this has nothing to do with incremental. It has to do with abortion policies.

MS. MCGLOWAN: You are the Congressional member. You were there and I did not know about the Senate bill but I'm happy to know that there is something out there that's helping people become healthy.

MS. ERBE: Is this going to sort of stand as a lure to every pregnant woman in the world who's not an American citizen to get here illegally and then she could get free care? I mean, does that trouble you?

MS. PFOTENHAUER: That's interesting because I think no matter how pure the motives when legislations pass, there are always are unintended consequences and that could in fact occur. I think we've seen other legislation that's got through because that has inadvertently acted as a magnet and pulled people in – illegal immigrants into this country to benefit from welfare reform and things like that. I tend to say, if it's prenatal care, great. I don't care how it gets here. I'm glad that we're helping with prenatal care because I think it's one of the most important things to do to solve and potentially avoid some worse problems later on but I am troubled by your comments that there's kind of a fall-off-the-cliff for five years. I don't think that that's – that doesn't seem to make much sense.

MS. MCGLOWAN: Well, we need to fix the system. We need to fix the system and elect more members that – elect more members that will protect women's rights. I

like the fact that this is happening. It should be broader. It should go more but let's not insult or put down what is happening.

DEL. NORTON: Why didn't they support the Senate bill which would have protected the mother, protected the child, protected the young children all at the same time?

MS. ERBE: Congresswoman, as a lawyer, as former chair of EEOC, what does this do to -- the first time the government is recognizing a fetus as a child, as a person. What are the legal ramifications here?

DEL. NORTON: Fortunately this doesn't have any effect on that. It has no legal effect because this is a constitutional matter and a political administration cannot define who is a person and who is not a person.

MS. BEYER: But couldn't this be used as an evolving legal trend, too?

DEL. NORTON: No, it can be used in court. I don't think it will stand up because there is a Supreme Court decision that very explicitly says that a fetus is not a person. So I think they're trying but I think it's a boot-strap try that won't work.

MS. ERBE: All right, on to the next topic. Behind the headlines -- and by the way, thank you, Angela and Nancy for being with us this part of the show. Behind the headlines, public school reform. As all mothers, fathers, teachers and others involved with the nation's public school system know there's a huge debate in this country about the system's future. Why do so many kids fail or drop out? Why do kids in wealthy suburbs perform better than kids in inner city schools? Can public education become the source of pride it once was and if so, who should pay? This week we may have an answer to these questions and it comes from Houston, Texas.

ANCHORWOMAN: The Houston public school system: 90 percent minority, students overwhelmingly lower income, and yet Houston school system produced test results that are nothing short of amazing. In three years between 1999 and 2001, elementary, middle and high school students boosted reading and math proficiency scores across the board. Achievement gaps between high and low income students and between white and minority students were but by about half.

For this, the Houston School District was awarded the First Annual Broad Prize for Urban Education. The award honors educational innovation and achievement and brings with it a celebration of the school districts hard work and a half million dollars in college scholarships for Houston students. Houston competed against 100 other urban school districts for this prize and won because:

ELI BROAD: Houston exhibited demonstrable decreases in achievement gaps across ethnic groups, in between high and low income of families. How did Houston do

that? The school district leaders planned for students to succeed and they did. They outlined specific goals and academic objectives.

ANCHOR: The award comes at a time when the nation's public schools are under fire. Some politicians want to de-fund them. Others want to hold them accountable for failing students. But in this case, Republicans and Democrats together praised Houston as a model and a beacon, a source of hope for other school systems.

SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY (D-MA): The recognition for urban excellence is so important because the children that go to our urban schools are the most challenged children in America. They're going to schools in too many instances that are dilapidated. That is a national disgrace.

SENATOR BARBARA BOXER (D-CA): To get that kind of infusion of funds into a school district means so much. Secondly, you are highlighting and spotlighting the successes in our public schools. Too many times we hear the negatives, negatives, negatives.

SENATOR KAY BAILEY HUTCHINSON (R-TX): I think that's said to all of our students, you can do this. We know you can do this. We're encouraging you to do this and that is one of the reasons for the success.

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN: This country, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, won 168 Nobel Prizes in science. You know, we've sent a spaceship to Mars. We sent a man to the moon. I don't for a moment believe that this great nation doesn't have the means and the know how to teach every child to read by third grade and to get every child out of high school.

SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D-NY): It truly does carry the prestige we hope, and intend to see occur, of a Pulitzer or a Nobel to once again raise our sights, to ask ourselves, is this the best we can be.

MS. ERBE: How did Houston do it?

KAY STRIPLING: Well, first of all, we have a strong curriculum in the Houston schools called Project Clear and it is pretty clear. It pretty much says what it is we want students to learn and it's very explicit about how teachers teach and what they are to teach and then the accountability and holding people accountable for teaching and learning.

MS. ERBE: Did it cost money?

MS. STRIPLING: Well, I'm sure. Yes. I mean, our reading program has cost additional money. I don't even know how much, but you know, I never really look at it that way because there's no cost too great to help our children. I really feel that.

MS. ERBE: Is Houston now an example for the rest of the nation?

MR. BROAD: I think every other school district in the nation can do it if they put in the amount of energy, planning and dedication that Houston has put in over the last 10 years.

MS. ERBE: There's a huge fight in the country now about public education and whether it can succeed. Does Houston prove that that fight is over?

MR. BROAD: Improving public education in a large urban school district has to be a team effort. It starts with the governing body, which is either the school board or, in the case of New York, Chicago, Boston, some other cities, the mayor. And the mayor has to work with management – the superintendent, the principals – get the support of the entire community, the business community and others, and work with the teachers and their representatives, the teacher's union.

ROD PAIGE: What Houston did is really nothing magical. It has to do with behavior to face some realities and put some programs in place to address them and stay the course over a long period of time. And that's open to every school district in America.

ANCHORWOMAN: Rod Paige was Houston's superintendent, before being appointed by President Bush as education secretary.

SEC. PAIGE: The lesson is that minorities, in a city where young kids who have heretofore been considered difficult to teach, can indeed learn if the emphasis is placed on it and if the environment is right and if constructional strategy is correct and based on scientific-based principles, it can happen.

MS. ERBE: Margaret Spellings and Lisa Keegan, thank you very much for joining the panel – both experts in education. Margaret, does this – as President Bush's domestic policy advisor, does this prove that all inner-city urban schools, the most challenged schools in the country, they can all meet a standard of excellence?

MARGARET SPELLINGS: Absolutely. That's what No Child Left Behind is about and I don't think it's a secret or magic, as Secretary Paige said. That the reason for this is it's notion of accountability, annual assessment, high standards, keeping the focus on – what's happening in Houston has for some and every school in American can do that – every school district.

MS. ERBE: Why hasn't every school done it?

DEL. NORTON: Well first of all, I don't think this has anything to do with the Leave No Child Behind Act, which has been funded very sparsely. I think this largely has to do with a school that over a period of time, working very hard with a superintendent, got a curriculum, that it knew worked. We have charter schools in the

District of Colombia. They're not doing as well as our public schools for one good reason. We have in the public schools now a curriculum that has been tried out as scientifically as educators can do and that works. That is has been spread throughout the school systems. Charter schools, for all the wonderful experimentation they do don't have that kind of focus. It's that kind of focus – and I'm going to say, I disagree with, you know, start with the mayor. You start with hiring yourself a superintendent who knows what he's doing and the rest takes care of itself.

MS. ERBE: He or she.

DEL. NORTON: He or she. If the mayor and the school board in fact trust and get behind their superintendent.

MS. ERBE: Lisa, from your perspective what does it take? And what about this prize that came out this week? Will this sort of thing help public school reform in achieving excellence?

LISA GRAHAM KEEGAN: Well, it does because it's evidence that it's possible. I think it has everything to do with No Child Left Behind. No Child Left Behind is a national statement that says all children need to be able to learn.

DEL. NORTON: It's not in effect yet.

MS. KEEGAN: Well it is. It's an attitude. It came into being by the president and the majority of Congress – not just fully formed out of the head of Zeus. This was a move of the country. As you can, in Houston and other places where people just decided we are absolutely going to have our children reading by the third grade. They are absolutely going to be fluent with their mathematics. Standards aren't just sort of vacuous things somewhere, some vague notion. It is, can these kids do what they need to do to be able to either move on to more education or to get a job after 12<sup>th</sup> grade. That's No Child Left Behind.

MS. BEYER: And committing the country to do it. And I do think you're right. It's an idea whose time has come. It sort of reminds of JFK saying, we are going to put a man on the moon but he didn't turn around and cut NASA. And what worries me is that this bill – so many education advocates say we don't have the money for the teacher development that we were hoping for.

MS. KEEGAN: Oh, there's so much more money in this bill. So much more money in this bill.

DEL. NORTON: Well, let me just talk about money in this bill.

MS. ERBE: Let's get Margaret in here just for a second and then you, Congresswoman.

MS. SPELLINGS: A couple things. We've had large increase in Title 1, the programs that are pointed at the neediest kids.

MS. ERBE: Large increases meaning what?

MS. SPELLINGS: Twenty-seven percent increase overall in ESEA, 17 to 18 percent increases in Title 1. The money's focuses at the most disadvantaged kids. The things that Houston has been doing – annual assessment of every kid, reading and math, dis aggregating the data. Those things, those ingredients, that Houston has done, that have gotten them to this point or exactly what's called for in No Child Left Behind and what's coming to every school district in America.

DEL. NORTON: Let me tell you what concerns me. There's a two percent increase in this budget. The Congress is absolutely up in arms of the failed promise. Beyond that, we're going to hold very troubled minority kids to higher standards, something that we must do. And I can tell you right now that without more resources we're going to have kids dropping out of school because they're not going to meet those standards and we're going to have unintended effects. The only way to keep those unintended effects from occurring is to do what we did in the four years prior to this administration where funding for education doubled.

Here we have the president barely funding his own program and yet holding school systems, and particularly those systems which the most troubled students, to very high standards. When they don't meet those standards -- when these minority kids in the District, in Detroit and in New York, who are already dropping out in huge numbers, don't meet those standards, then of course that terrible unintended effect is going to come in. And the only way to do it is if you're going to put the bill in, fund the damn bill.

MS. KEEGAN: You know what, it doesn't cost any more to expect more, Congresswoman. It does not cost more to say these kids can absolutely achieve. You go in to the Kip Academy in New York that is right next to the public school – traditional district school. These kids are from the same neighborhood, same families, same circumstance. These kids are outstanding and these kids are not making it and it's because of expectation. Kip doesn't have a dime more money. So money is important and the president has fully funded this program, my goodness – and the Congress. That's not the issue.

MS. ERBE: I do want to ask you though. I mean something about the Houston statistics was – that amazed me – was that the differences – the gaps were narrowed between white and Hispanic, white and African American and low income and higher income. There aren't any hugely high income – or very few – in the Houston public school system – it's an inner city school. But low-income and sort of middle-income kids –

DEL. NORTON: I commend Houston for doing it. We're actually doing the very same thing in this city without any more money. The fact is, though, that this bill does

depend upon more money because the president himself holds people to a standard and ties it to money, which he has not put in the bill.

MS. BEYER: Well, this is what worries me. It's like Lamar Alexander when he created Goals 2000 under Bush. One, he was worried about unfunded mandates. There are a lot of things that are going to cost some money to implement in the bill.

MS. ERBE: All right, we got to go to one other topic. We'll come back during credits. Sorry about this. One final note, a sad note. "To the Contrary" mourns the passing this week of Hawaii Democrat, Patsy Mink, the first Asian-American woman to serve in Congress. Mink's career spanned 24 years in the U.S. House. Perhaps her most important accomplishment, and one for which she did not receive enough credit, was a champion for the rights of women and girls and for driving passage of the landmark Title 9 legislation, which granted women equality in education and athletics. Every time a little girl plays soccer or a woman athlete represents the U.S. at the Olympics, she has Patsy Mink, in part, to thank. Mink was 74.

That's it for this edition of "To the Contrary." Next week we profile Francis Kissling, whose goal it is to make the Catholic church, in her words, more woman-friendly. Whether your views are in agreement or to the contrary, please join us next time. We want to hear from you. Write to us at [tothecontrary@pbs.org](mailto:tothecontrary@pbs.org) or visit our PBS online website at pbs.org.

DEL NORTON: You know, Patsy was the first woman of color, not just the first Asian woman, four years before Shirley Chisholm got there.

MS. ERBE: Really? That I had no –

DEL. NORTON: Patsy Mink was the first one.

MS. ERBE: That I didn't know and would have said – (laughter) – had I known it. But back to bill, you were saying it has effects already.

(Cross talk.)

MS. SPELLINGS: -- law in January. It's effective in every state and every school district in America. I think Congresswoman Holmes Norton is right when she talked about –

(END)